

Meet Worldr, the startup building privacy, security, and compliance layers for communication tools

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Max Buchan, CEO and Founder of Worldr about data sovereignty, adding value to existing platforms and finding true product market fit.

I started Worldr right after my journey at the CoinShares Group. Having been on the very earliest team at CoinShares, which later became Europe's largest digital asset manager (and later went on to IPO), it was my first experience of operating in a heavily regulated environment. It was also my first exposure to working across multiple jurisdictions, each of which has its own individual mandates around data sharing/export. Data localisation and data residency became front of mind, as well as an understanding of the need for better communication and collaboration tools to meet regulatory mandates across the globe. Coupled with this, my co-founder and COO, Dima, had been a corporate lawyer for well over 10 years and had repeatedly encountered similar problems, especially when it came to sensitive data in cross-border dispute resolution.

We saw an opportunity to build a secure platform utilising zero-trust frameworks that would meet the needs of highly regulated industries, such as finance and healthcare.

Tell me about the business – what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so on?

Worldr builds privacy, security, and compliance layers for the most popular communication tools in the world. This means businesses can comply with regulations and secure their data, without leaving the platforms they already use.

Worldr for Microsoft Teams and Worldr for Slack solutions deliver privacy and security so no third-party can access your data while also enabling data localisation. Worldr for WhatsApp lets you continue communicating with customers, employees, and stakeholders in a compliant way by making conversations auditable without the need for an additional app. This mitigates the risk of hefty fines for regulated industries from the likes of the SEC, FINRA, FCA and more.

We currently have customers across the UK, US and UAE and they range from large multinationals and Fortune 500s, down to small, regulated firms out of regional financial hubs. Our goal for Worldr is to be completely software agnostic, so a company could apply it to all and any applications that hold data. Having started with collaboration products, we are planning to extend these capabilities into email early next year, and then release further integration points into whichever software our customers need help securing.

How has the business evolved since its launch? When was this?

Initially, we envisioned Worldr as a secure messenger solution built as a direct competitor to Slack back in 2019. We assumed it would be an obvious need given the fact that about 92% of the world's data is stored in the US. We thought there would be a big demand. However, we quickly realised the difficulty in getting enterprise-level customers to completely overhaul their departments and implement new solutions. We pivoted and decided to utilise our infrastructure to build applications on top of existing communication solutions, like Microsoft Teams – our flagship product.

Tell us about the working culture at Worldr

Above all else, I would say to work at Worldr you must be curious. We encourage a culture built around exploration, solving problems, and asking questions. Worldr also fosters a people-first culture that focuses on creating a supportive environment where our teams can collaborate on building meaningful solutions. We support a flexible, remote first environment that embraces the thoughts, ideas, and perspectives of all its individual contributors. Our team is located across the globe from London to Chicago to Dubai and everywhere in between.

How are you funded?

Worldr has now raised a Seed of \$11M from some of Europe's most reputable investors, including Molten Ventures, IQ Capital and Playfair Capital. Additionally, we have received investment from a multitude of industry specialist angels including Alex Walsh (Senior MD, Blackstone), Hussain Baig (ex, Global COO & CIO, HSBC) and John Theroux (ex-Vice Chairman, Bain & Co).

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

I think at the beginning of any startup, your biggest challenge is to find a true product market fit. Especially in our case, since the cybersecurity market has grown so much over the last decade, with phenomenal innovations, we had to focus on our goal of building a category-defining product in its own niche. Once we established our place as a security and compliance layer on top of existing platforms, the more pressing concern became getting buy-in from Microsoft and other platforms we work with. Initially, we were concerned that these larger brands would see us as a competitor or assume we were trying to drive users away from platforms – which is definitely not the case. We had to demonstrate that we were actually adding to these platforms, and if anything, making them even more valuable to their existing and prospective customers in a way that benefits all parties. *If they grow, we grow.*

In receiving a place on the Microsoft ISV partner programme, we have gained a lot of support in driving further adoption and help in mitigating any concerns their existing or future customers may have about data sovereignty and residency.

How does Worldr answer an unmet need?

Data sovereignty will become an even more prevalent issue in the years to come. Businesses will need to have direct, and sometimes sole access to the data they create and share. With the requirement to use so many third-party applications, the threat landscape has grown significantly over the last few years. The shift to remote working and collaboration has introduced new security risks for businesses.

Large cloud computing companies are moving to address the market pull for better communication tools, but customers require a high degree of trust that their most sensitive messages and files are secure and compliant in the cloud.

What's in store for the future?

Our latest funding injection will enable Worldr to meet the growing demand for our zero-trust architecture across a multitude of communication and collaboration apps, as well as expand our presence in the US with a dedicated office in New York. This will support the company's ongoing relationship with Microsoft, as part of the Independent Partner Network. We are also expanding our operations into the Middle East and have started building a dedicated team based in Dubai.

In the future, we plan to build out the Worldr infrastructure to accommodate a variety of solutions. So, regardless of the communication or collaboration app, you could utilise Worldr for added privacy, security, and compliance measures.

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

My number one piece of advice is to invest in people who believe in your vision. As a founder, it can be quite lonely at times, so it's important to surround yourself with a supportive team and a strong network of advisors. Not an easy feat – however one that we prioritise at Worldr.

We celebrate successes and endure failures together as a team, so everyone feels like a contributor. We've built a culture of open communication, so tough conversations become much easier and less siloed. The more you can rely on your team as a founder, the easier your day-to-day becomes because you can count on their support having built that trust and earned their buy-in early on.

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

Balance at work is something I've been actively working on recently. And what I mean by that is – as a founder, your job takes you in many different directions and often there are a lot of things vying for your attention. At the beginning of our journey, I would often find myself spending days at a time executing one thing – whether that was sales, product, or fundraising (when relevant).

Now I try to prioritise balance in my days to address the various activities we're working on. So, for instance, I could be working on a new partner initiative in a different geography in the morning, turn my attention to the product around midday when our Head of Product (based in the US) is up and running, and then join a few sales calls in the afternoon. Having exposure to multiple things I think also helps you process information better.

Finally – my new rule is that there must be something you're excited about every day! So that could be the tiniest thing. Every night I review my schedule for the next day, and there has to be (at least) one thing out of the ordinary, whether it's reconnecting with someone I haven't spoken to in a while, working on a special project, or having a meeting in person at a great coffee spot.

Max Buchan is CEO and Founder at Worldr.

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